

TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In the News



May 18, 2012 - June 14, 2012



TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In the News

Print Media

- Havana Herald..... 4, 20,21
- WTXL..... 5,12,25
- Webwire 6
- Tallahassee Democrat. 7,9,10,13,14,15,17,18,24,28,29
- WCTV..... 8,19,32,33
- Community College Times 11,12
- The Daily Commercial. 16
- The Florida Current..... 22,23
- News Press. 26
- Orlando Sentinel 27
- Saint Petersburg 30
- Sunshine State News 31

TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In the News



Electronic Media

- WCTV.....President Murdaugh recommends no tuition increase, May 23
- WCTV.....FPSI trainees honor slain detective, June 12
- WTXL FPSI trainees honor slain detective, June 12

GOV. SCOTT REAPPOINTS EUGENE LAMB TO TCC BOARD

Herald News Report

Governor Rick Scott announced the reappointment of Eugene Lamb, Jr. and Frank S. Messersmith to **Tallahassee Community College's** District Board of Trustees last Wednesday.

"We appreciate the Governor's reappointment of Trustees Lamb and Messersmith," said **TCC** President Jim Murdaugh. "Their reappointment confirms that **TCC's** commitment to providing high quality education with market value, keeping tuition affordable, and supporting economic development in our community is recognized at the highest level."

Trustee Lamb was appointed to the Board in 2007 by then-Governor Charlie Crist. He served a term as chair in 2010-11 and was on the Presidential Search Committee that selected Murdaugh as **TCC's** sixth president.

Lamb, who represents Gadsden County, has been a Commissioner with the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners since 2004. He was athletic director for Gadsden County Schools from 2007 to 2009, a teacher with Leon County Schools from 1971 to 2004 and a recreation supervisor with the City of Tallahassee from 1992 to 2005.

Trustee Messersmith is the senior member of **TCC's** Board, having been appointed by then-Governor Jeb Bush in 1999 and reappointed by Crist in 2007. His 13-years of service include two terms as chair (2002-03 and 2008-09).

Messersmith, who represents Wakulla County, has been a governmental consultant with FSM Associates since 2000. He served on the Florida Public Safety Commission from 1990 to 1992, in the Florida House of Representatives from 1980 to 1990 and was an assistant to the Sheriff of Palm Beach County from 1968 to 1978.

"Strong and effective governance by Trustees is key to our ability to meet the needs of our community," added Murdaugh.

"Trustees Lamb and Messersmith are noble ambassadors for the citizens of Gadsden and Wakulla counties, respectively.

"Their record of responsible trusteeship and stewardship of college resources is commendable."

Both Lamb and Messersmith are reappointed for terms beginning May 9, 2012, and ending May 31, 2014. Both appointments are subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate.

Revell family raises money for memorial scholarship

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (WTVL) -- Friends of a former Leon County Corrections officer killed last year in a motorcycle accident are raising money for a memorial scholarship.

Anthony Revell was just 26 years old when he was killed last year. Investigators say Revell was riding his motorcycle when he was hit by a fire truck at the intersection of White Drive and Tennessee Street.

Revell's mom, Pamela Hodges, says when her son was killed he was living his dream, working as a corrections officer. They're now raising money to provide a scholarship for a law enforcement student in the Pat Thomas Police Academy at [Tallahassee Community College](#).

Friends, family, and strangers held a car wash Saturday at the very intersection where Revell was killed.

"We just want someone else to have an opportunity to carry on where he couldn't," Hodges said. "It makes me feel so proud that everybody is out here helping that I don't even know."

To date they've been able to raise about \$12,500 with more than \$800 being raised during Saturday's car wash. Revell's family hopes to raise \$20,000.

Solo Art Show featuring Artist Julie Bowland opening May 26th at The Buchanan Museum of Fine Art

The Buchanan Museum of Fine Art is pleased to announce its May 26th, 2012 exhibition opening featuring Plein Air Expressionist works by Julie Bowland, a fast rising star of the contemporary art market.

Ms. Bowland's background includes her current position as Gallery Director and Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at Valdosta State University.

Before moving to Valdosta, Ms. Bowland lived in North Florida for almost 20 years, teaching Art at Florida State University and [Tallahassee Community College](#), and for almost seven years was the Arts in Public Places Director for the Cultural Resources Commission (now Council On Culture & Arts), the local arts agency for Tallahassee and Leon County, where she directed the City Hall and Airport Art Galleries.

Previously, Ms. Bowland was director of the 621 Gallery, an independent contemporary non-profit art space in Tallahassee. Ms. Bowland She received her BFA, Magna Cum Laude, from Florida State University, and continuing with Expressionist [i]Plein Air[/i] paintings, earned an MFA, Magna Cum Laude, from Arizona State University in Tempe. Jeffrey Antisdell, Managing Director of the Buchanan Museum of Fine Art, commented "...Julie grew up in the Midwest, staying in nearby Bertrand township for a number of years while making frequent trips to the Chicago Art Institute. These trip trips fed her appetite for the works of Monet and Van Gogh, where nature itself was a dominant form of inspiration, and as influential as the art itself..."

Antisdell added, "In that Julie was born in Florida, her expressionist works have always gravitated to lush, watery wooded landscapes which are incredibly striking and memorable, rich with color and dense textures. I personally viewed Julie's early works in the early 1970's and remember them well to this very day. Julie's paintings are bold and memorable..."

Ms. Bowland's paintings are found in private, public and corporate collections including the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Daytona Beach, the City of Tallahassee Permanent Collection, Barnett Bank in Jacksonville, First South Bank in Tallahassee and Florida Community College at Jacksonville. Further, Ms. Bowland's work has been shown extensively throughout the Southeastern United States, where it has won numerous awards in juried exhibitions.

Ms. Bowland will also be featuring educational workshop at The Buchanan Art Center entitled "Expressionistic Plein Air Drawings and paintings". This workshop is Scheduled for Tuesday, May 29th, from 2:00pm to 5:00pm. With three galleries, gift center and expansive art education programs, The Buchanan Art Center is please to exhibit and train artists and students with this fine workshop presented by Julie Bowland.

About the Buchanan Museum of Fine Art

Recognized as Southwestern Michigan's largest public art museum, the Buchanan Museum of Fine Art is focused exclusively on the conservation, preservation and exhibition of historic works of American and European art. Underwritten by private investment and the volunteer efforts of prominent citizens Southwestern Michigan, the Buchanan Museum Collection is housed in the nationally recognized Collins & Weaver Opera House (circa 1867).

Historically, the Buchanan "Opera House" served as a cultural center to Southwestern Michigan, with music, theatre, lectures, political caucuses, socials and graduations held on premises. Notably, this historic site also served some of the first motion picture showings held in the early 20th Century. The Buchanan Museum of Fine Art is proud to continue with its heritage, with ongoing contributions to art education through the exhibition historic works of fine art.

The Buchanan Museum is a proud member of the Michigan Museums Association and is open to the General Public. Admission is free of charge.

Contact:

Jeffrey Antisdell

Managing Director

Buchanan Museum of Fine Art

102 East Front Street

Buchanan, Michigan 49107

www.BuchananMuseum.org

Historic Emancipation Proclamation still conveys hope today

JORDAN CULVER

Mothers and fathers — still dressed in their Sunday best on a day set aside for prayer — brought their children to the Knott House Sunday afternoon to see history come alive.

For the first time since 2000, the annual rereading of the Emancipation Proclamation fell on a weekend. Gathered at Lewis Park, parents took full advantage of sunshine and mild weather and joined the re-enactors at the Knott House in remembering the day Tallahassee learned the end of slavery had come.

Leon County Commission Chairman Akin Akinyemi said he was happy to see so many parents brought their children out for an important history lesson.

“Our struggle has been a long time coming,” he said. “I’m so happy to be alive to witness this celebration.”

Akinyemi was one of hundreds gathered in the park to watch Brian Bibeau portray Brig. Gen. Edward McCook alongside Union soldiers. McCook was the representative who read president Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in 1865.

He read the proclamation on the steps of what would become the Knott House.

The crowd silently read along with Bibeau who — after years of practice — could deliver the address without tripping over a word. Jeana Brunson, director of the Florida Museum of History, said the museum has been putting on the event for 17 years.

Although she couldn’t give exact figures, she said putting on the event is a “substantial monetary” undertaking. She added help from sponsors like the city of Tallahassee and Po’ Boys Creole Cafe are key to making the event possible.

“The purpose of this event is to let people in Tallahassee know about an important part of our history,” Brunson said.

Keynote speaker Andrea Oliver, an assistant professor of history at [Tallahassee Community College](#), said the lives of the newly emancipated were difficult. However their ability to prevail through difficult times could be used as an example of how to overcome challenges today.

Oliver spoke about what she saw as a disconnect in today’s education, a “disproportionate amount of black males in prison” and the issues facing single-parent homes. She said looking to the past for answers provides black children today with a solid foundation for the future.

“Without a systemic remedy to our systemic ails, our problems will simply not go away,” she said. “The dignity and perseverance demonstrated by our forefathers enabled them to make possible the impossible.”

Akinyemi said there is still work to be done, especially with educating children about the importance of this era in history. But events such as the Emancipation Celebration are a step in the right direction, he said.

“Oftentimes kids are quick to say, ‘Oh that’s no longer discrimination,’ or ‘Oh things are better,’” he said. “To a degree, they are right. At the same time, you have to know your history. You have to know where you’ve been to know where you are going.”

TCC President Proposes No Tuition Increase

TCC Press Release

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (May 21, 2012) –Today, [Tallahassee Community College](#) President Jim Murdaugh announced to the College's District Board of Trustees that, in keeping with Governor Rick Scott's recommendations regarding college tuition, he is not recommending a tuition increase for the 2012-13 academic year. This recommendation was made at today's monthly Board of Trustees meeting despite the Florida Legislature's authorization of up to a five percent increase in tuition for colleges statewide.

On April 17, 2012, when he issued implementing language for the budget the Governor wrote, "I believe that increases in tuition and fees, if any, should be specifically designed to improve learning gains, enhance or improve services that are targeted toward higher completion and placement rates, or to expand or improve programs that are tied directly to Florida's workforce needs."

President Murdaugh said, "We applaud this move toward greater accountability. Unless and until we can identify strategies to improve the outcomes of our College in the three areas that the Governor identified, we will not ask our Trustees to vote for a tuition increase."

TCC leadership does monitor and implement strategies in the three areas the Governor asked colleges to focus on before considering tuition increases. **TCC's** emphasis on improved learning gains has been tracked at 85 percent and 82 percent of students achieving learning gains at the mastery level in the areas of critical thinking and written communication, respectively.

TCC's completion rate is almost three percent higher than the state average. Still, extra effort is being made to enhance student engagement, intervene early when needed and offer greater outside the classroom learning support and experiences. The College is working to improve programs tied to Florida's workforce needs by expanding STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and environmental programs and aligning with local advisory boards to determine the best education and training needed for in-demand jobs.

TCC tuition and fees are \$96.83 per credit hour for in-state residents; \$373.99 per credit hour for out-of-state residents.

TCC Board members will vote on the 2012-13 budget at the June District Board of Trustees meeting scheduled for June 18 at 4 p.m.

SAM team receives national awards

Karen Atkinson

The Flagler College Tallahassee Society for Advancement of Management Team recently attended the SAM national convention in Las Vegas.

The Flagler College Tallahassee Chapter had three students, Monica Blount, Rashawn Juman, and Lisa Sparkman-Allen that were recognized as SAM Outstanding Student Regional award winners. Blount was also named the recipient of the inaugural Mervat M. Abdelsamad Outstanding SAM Student Award, recognizing her as the most outstanding SAM student in the country.

Faculty advisor Bob Garner received the Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award, and the Flagler College Tallahassee SAM Chapter also received the Campus Chapter Performance Program award in the small chapter division. The chapter performed over 140 hours of community service including participating in the Humane Society Dog Washes, the Harley Davidson Toys for Tots drive, play dates at the Florida Baptist Children's Home, and a peanut butter drive at Flalger that raised 297 jars of peanut butter for Manna, the Bradfordville Baptist Church food pantry.

Flagler College Tallahassee, a satellite campus for Flagler College in St. Augustine, is located on the campus of [Tallahassee Community College](#) and has approximately 240 business and accounting students.

TCC likely to hold the line on tuition

Paul Flemming

When Gov. Rick Scott signed the state's budget in April he said Florida's public colleges should only raise tuition if necessary and, even then, be prepared to show how the extra money would be used to make them better.

On Monday, [Tallahassee Community College](#) President Jim Murdaugh said Scott was right and the college will work on figuring out how to improve and measure its performance before seeking more money from students.

Murdaugh recommended no tuition increases for the 2012-13 academic year.

The board of trustees will likely formally approve the move next month when it votes on [TCC's](#) budget.

[TCC's](#) \$96.83 tuition and required fees per credit hour places it in the lower third of the state's 28 public colleges, a rate that translates to a \$2,304 annual tuition cost at a 30 credit-hour course load. That's the rate this year and would remain the same for classes in the fall if approved by the board.

Murdaugh's presentation to trustees prominently featured Scott's admonition to state colleges to carefully consider tuition increases. Budget language approved by lawmakers capped tuition increases in the state college system at 5 percent.

"I believe that increases in tuition and fees, if any, should be specifically designed to improve learning gains, enhance or improve services that are targeted toward higher completion and placement rates, or to expand or improve programs that are tied directly to Florida's workforce needs," Scott wrote in his transmittal letter when he signed the state's \$70 billion budget in April.

Murdaugh said he and his executive team still need to develop plans to address the areas Scott mentioned.

"I thought he asked some reasonable things," Murdaugh said of Scott budget message. "I don't believe we are prepared to lay out strategies, with costs, to move us where we need to be with our metrics."

Murdaugh did point out that [TCC](#) performs well, but is always looking for improvement. [TCC's](#) student completion rate, for instance, is 37.4 percent, above the state average of 34.6 percent.

In Murdaugh's presentation to trustees Monday, revenue projections for [TCC](#) are at \$63.5 million for the 2013 fiscal year, down \$737,143 from the current year.

"In our case, we're lean enough to begin with and disciplined enough that it wasn't all that horrible an exercise," said Allison, chair of [TCC's](#) board, of the budget presentation. "There's no default position for increased tuition."

The board is set to meet June 18 to vote on the [TCC](#) budget.

Graduating students take to the stage and podium

TABITHA WHISSEMORE

Keynote commencements typically feature speeches from local or even national figures. This year, graduating students are taking the spotlight in their speeches, talking about overcoming obstacles and offering wisdom gained from experience, as well as outlining their hopes for the future.

Candice Grause was not atypical among student speakers this year. She juggled two jobs, a marriage and parenting with being a full-time student at **Tallahassee Community College (TCC)** in Florida. She recently graduated with a 4.0 grade-point average.

"You will change the world," Grause—a social media specialist at **TCC**—told her classmates. "You will go out into the world and make a positive difference, no matter how big or small it may be. It's not an 'if' or a 'maybe.' Our burden and our advantage is that we do not have a choice."

An early start

Noor Tagouri, 18, will get her chance to speak on May 24 when she graduates from Prince George's Community College in Maryland. Tagouri is the youngest student speaker in PGCC's history.

"The message I want to convey to our diverse student body at graduation is you will always pave a path to success and your dreams will always be attainable," Tagouri said.

Tagouri's family is from Libya and was actively involved in supporting humanitarian efforts in the recent revolution. She is currently compiling stories of freedom fighters for a book she is writing to document their heroic efforts. She plans to study broadcast journalism and international development and conflict management at University of Maryland, College Park.

Brittany Johnson was only 15 when she first enrolled at Palm Beach State College (PBSC) in Florida. She had been homeschooled and went to college with little direction and a "fear of failure" because of her young age, she said during her speech at PBSC's May 8 ceremony. She graduated in 2007 with an associate of arts degree, but returned to study dental hygiene.

"Remember where you came from, and never lose sight of where you're going," Johnson advised.

Support systems

Faith Proper was PBSC's second student speaker. Proper, too, had been homeschooled. She had serious health issues before she attended PBSC, but, with the help of medication, was able to lead an active lifestyle at college.

She became a student trustee on the Palm Beach State District Board of Trustees, a Phi Theta Kappa officer and won numerous awards and scholarships. Proper spoke about how, in the pursuit of her achievements, she sacrificed relationships. She said the most important lesson she learned at PBSC was that all those accomplishments weren't worth anything "if you don't have someone to share it with."

She thanked the friends, family, peers and professors in attendance for "pushing us when we could push no further."

Proper has been accepted to Emory University in Atlanta.

Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell student Gina Vela, who graduated with a nursing degree, was the featured speaker at the college's May 11 ceremony. Vela is the first in her family to graduate from college. She gave her speech in both English and Spanish—a "conscious attempt," she said, to include her parents.

"I am here today as a direct result of my parent's encouragement and support," Vela said.

Sage advice

Even though this year seems to be the year of the student in terms of speeches, leaders from business, government, entertainment and education were on hand at many ceremonies to congratulate graduates and offer advice.

Second Lady Jill Biden addressed graduates of Broward College in Florida on May 4, just after wrapping up the semester at Northern Virginia Community College, where she teaches.

Graduating students take to the stage and podium...

continued

She advised graduates to “lift up others, always go to your strength and never stop learning.”

Later that week, Biden traveled to rural Iowa to speak at the ceremony at Southwestern Community College.

In Tennessee, Shelby County Mayor Mark Luttrell delivered the commencement address to Southwest Tennessee Community College’s graduating class. Luttrell challenged students to “be part of the solution.”

“Challenge yourself to perfect your abilities. Use your toolbox of knowledge and experience. Learn to let go, learn the jargon, learn the culture, best practices and about range of career opportunities. And build relationships,” Luttrell said.

At Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) in Utah, soccer star and Olympic gold medalist Abby Wambach also talked about the importance of relationships.

“We all need each other...We push each other farther, past our own expectations,” Wambach said at the May 3 ceremony.

On Wednesday, Walter Bumphus, president of the American Association of Community Colleges, will deliver the keynote at Hudson County Community College in New Jersey. That same day, Rod Risley, executive director of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, will present the commencement address at Santa Fe Community College in New Mexico.

WTXL - May 22, 2012

Twenty-six student-athletes earn spring academic accolades at TCC

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (May 21, 2012) - During the recently completed Spring 2012 semester at [Tallahassee Community College](#), a total of 26 student-athletes earned honors recognition for their work in the classroom.

The following student-athletes were named to the President’s List (4.0 GPA): Matt Duval, baseball; Matt Heckroth, baseball; Megan Oster, softball.

The following student-athletes were named to the Dean’s List (3.5-3.99 GPA): Ashley Alexander, women’s basketball; Jarrod Batson, men’s basketball; Brandon Fleming, baseball; Hayden Jordan, baseball; Patrick Riley, baseball; Graham Saiko, baseball; Cameron Tewksbury, baseball; Daniel VanSickle, baseball; Raisa West, women’s basketball.

The following student-athletes were named to the Honor’s List (3.0-3.49 GPA): Michael Arencibia, baseball; Steven Brown, baseball; Nick Deckert, baseball; Tommy Hanks, baseball; Trent Higginbotham, baseball; Alanna Leasau, softball; Devin Kochergen, softball; Bobby Rice, baseball; Jared Romero, baseball; Christina Solmon, women’s basketball; C.J. Washington, men’s basketball; Jessica Whitlock, softball.

The following student-athletes received Merit Recognition (students who are in developmental courses and complete a minimum of six hours with a minimum 3.0 GPA): Kristyn Barry, softball; Sarah Williams, women’s basketball.

Village Square nonprofit expands to St. Pete

Karl Etters

After six years in operation, The Village Square — a Tallahassee-based nonprofit that pushes for community engagement — is expanding Tuesday with the help of former Gov. Bob Graham.

The plan, which has developed over the past year, will make the St. Petersburg College in Pinellas County the location for the first offshoot of The Village Square. The organization draws from community members and aims to open dialogue about local, state and national matters that affect communities.

Liz Joyner, executive director of The Village Square Tallahassee, said she is excited about seeing the original idea expand to another city and practice the ability to talk about national issues.

"It's really about neighbors connecting with neighbors, regardless of their ideology," Joyner said. She added the local town hall meeting is what built America and that is what The Village Square aims to continue.

Bryan Desloge, The Village Square co-chair and Leon County Commissioner, said the organization is "trying to create a venue and a way for people to solve community issues without all the rancor and visceral debate and the spiteful back fighting you see in politics today. It doesn't mean it's not full contact, it doesn't mean you don't have spirited debates, it just means you talk about the facts."

David Klement, executive director of the Institute of Strategic Policy Solutions at SPC, said the movement in St. Pete was initiated by himself and St. Petersburg College President Bill Law. Law was a co-founder of the Tallahassee Chapter of the Village Square and the former president of [Tallahassee Community College](#).

Klement attended events in Tallahassee in 2009 and 2010 and said that he wanted to bring that kind of public discussion to his region.

"I would hope that we could emulate the Tallahassee chapter," said Klement. "We're learning from them, and we'll learn hopefully from their mistakes and can get up to their speed quickly."

Graham is expected to speak about renewing interest in civic duty in education. He was the choice as the keynote speaker because he "is respected across the state, on both sides of the aisle. He was never into the bipartisanship that exists now in many areas," Klement said.

Sen. Dennis L. Jones (R-Seminole), who oversees the Economic Development and Innovative Projects at SPC, said the goal of the forum is to bring public, not political, issues to the forefront of discussion.

Topics that the group will discuss include a seminar in September on the eleventh anniversary of 9/11 on what Americans have learned since the event, said both Jones and Klement.

Our Opinion: Efficiency first

TCC president takes novel stand on tuition

While reports abound about the skyrocketing costs of a college education, **Tallahassee Community College** President Jim Murdaugh is taking another approach.

Mr. Murdaugh decided not to ask **TCC's** Board of Trustees for approval to seek a tuition increase this fall at the college, where tuition is already among the lowest in the state. It's a decision some would consider risky. But Mr. Murdaugh is living by his belief that using tuition increases to cover the increased costs of operations lessens the responsibility of leaders to make sure that money is being spent wisely and that the school is being run efficiently.

Additionally, Mr. Murdaugh says **TCC** administrators and faculty can take this time to make sure they are meeting the guidelines set forth by Gov. Rick Scott, who asked college presidents in Florida to make sure that any request for a tuition increase comes with an outline of how that extra money will help the college meet certain benchmarks.

Mr. Murdaugh's decision comes at a time when **TCC's** revenue projections for next year are \$63.5 million, down \$737,000 from this fiscal year. Mr. Murdaugh says he's confident that the college can absorb those costs by examining its operations and its offerings and by staying with a conservative spending pattern.

This could mean a leaner, more efficiently operated college that continues to enjoy strong enrollment, particularly with adults who are returning to school to enhance their skills or to learn new ones.

While Mr. Murdaugh is following Gov. Scott's challenge, it might be a different story among his colleagues across the state.

When signing this year's budget, Gov. Scott, who is not a proponent of increasing tuition without first doing an internal review, said college presidents would need to bolster their requests for increases by showing how they would relate to:

- Learning gains.
- Enhancing or improving services that target higher completion and placement rates.
- Expanding or improving programs that are tied to Florida's workforce needs.

"I believe we have work to do to make sure we are as efficient as we can be," Mr. Murdaugh said. As for making up for the shortfall, Mr. Murdaugh said his team would work on efficiencies, including decisions on whether to fill vacant positions.

"This is the kind of exercise to focus the attention of my leadership to make sure we are as efficient as we can be. We aren't doing this to be a maverick. I believe this is the right decision to make at this time."

TCC under Mr. Murdaugh's leadership enjoys a strong reputation for offering courses and programs tailored to the local workforce demands, for its partnership with local businesses and governments, and for preparing students to continue their academic careers at four-year institutions.

TCC's trustees, who meet next month to discuss the budget, would be wise to follow his tuition proposal while the college re-examines its operations. That could only lead to a stronger **Tallahassee Community College**.

Sales-tax extension goes to voters

School Board gets Chamber endorsement

Lisa Fingerroot

After getting an endorsement from the business community on plans to extend a half-cent sales tax for 15 years, the Leon County School Board on Tuesday agreed to send the plan to voters on the November ballot.

Nearly 60 volunteers for the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce spent about 2,000 hours reviewing the plans and urged the chamber to officially endorse the proposal, which it did Tuesday afternoon.

Shortly after the chamber's action, the school board met, and adopted the question it wants voters to decide on the November ballot. The Leon County Commission still must vote to put the referendum before voters.

Voters will be asked if the school system can extend an existing half-cent sales tax by another 15 years and use the money to finance construction, renovation, remodeling, land purchases and the acquisition of technology equipment. The current sales tax was approved by voters in 2002 and ends Dec. 31. If approved, the extension would begin Jan. 1, 2013.

"We shudder to think what the learning environment would look like in our community if we had not had the sales tax during the last 10 years," said Jim Murdaugh, president of [Tallahassee Community College](#) and also chairman of the volunteer Capital Improvements Review Team.

An extension of the sales tax is expected to generate about \$265 million in the next 15 years. Though that funding won't deliver everything chamber committee members hoped, it is critical for maintaining educational standards and protecting investments in buildings and equipment.

"We assume that with careful management we will see some pretty exciting things," Murdaugh said.

Among the arguments for voter approval presented by the review team was that about a third of Leon sales taxes are paid by non-residents. The group also noted that the vast majority of construction spending from the current sales tax went to firms based in Leon and surrounding counties.

The chamber and Murdaugh have sent a strong message to the voters, Leon School Superintendent Jackie Pons said. "Our community, I think they get it when it comes to education."

SLHS grad shines on softball field, in classroom

FRANK JOLLEY

TALLAHASSEE -- Former South Lake High School softball standout Megan Oster was recently named recently Panhandle Conference Softball Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

Oster, who played second base during her career at South Lake, recently completed a two-year stint at [Tallahassee Community College](#) and has signed a national letter of intent with Morehead State University in Morehead, Ky.

While at Tallahassee CC, Oster batted .300 in 93 games and hit four home runs and had 28 RBIs. She earned All-Panhandle Conference honorable mention as a freshman and sophomore.

Academically, Oster graduated with honors and was named to the President's or Dean's lists after each semester at Tallahassee CC.

"I'm not surprised that Megan excelled on and off the field in college," said Beau Jarrell, who coached Oster during her freshman and sophomore years at South Lake. "For a kid who works as hard as she does, the sky has always been the limit for her. Megan has always pushed herself to be the best she can be on the field and in the classroom."

The award was voted on by the five coaches in the Panhandle Conference.

As a freshman, Oster was named All-Academic by the Panhandle Conference and the Florida College System Activities Association (FCSAA). This spring, she was honored at Tallahassee CC's Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year, and was a finalist for the top softball student athlete in the state.

Oster helped Tallahassee CC earn a berth in the National Junior College Division 1 National Championship tournament in 2011. Tallahassee CC failed to earn a second berth in 2012, but managed to post a 36-13 record.

Jarrell said Oster's future athletic success was displayed during her freshman season at South Lake on the team's biggest stage.

"Megan was named the outstanding hitter in the Blue Division of the Kissimmee Klassic softball tournament," Jarrell said. "That tournament attracts some of the best teams in the country and the best teams are placed in the Blue Division. Megan was not intimidated by the level of competition and just went out and played ball. She showed a lot of people even as a freshman that she was going to be something special."

"Many supporters consider her to be the best second baseman South Lake has ever produced."

Morehead State struggled to a 16-34 record this season and were 19-34 in 2011.

While at Morehead State, Oster will major in accounting.

Oster was part of a class of four signees at Morehead State.

"Megan will bring two years of college experience with her," said Morehead State coach David Williams. "She played playing in a very competitive Florida junior college system. She is a versatile player that can play several positions in the line-up effectively. She has the ability to play several positions and produce offensively, which makes her a valuable asset."

While at South Lake, Oster helped the Eagles earn a Class 4A state semifinal berth. In addition to second base, Oster also saw time as an outfielder during her high-school career, and batted .360 as a junior.

Wrestling with cancer makes graduation huge

Resolve propels Chiles student Chris Alford

JIM HENRY

Chris Alford can't describe the happiness he expects to feel on Wednesday night.

That's when Alford will walk across the Civic Center stage and be recognized as a Chiles High graduate, Class of 2012. Timberwolves forever.

While the commencement combines a fond farewell with a new beginning for students, it represents much more to Alford.

"I've learned you can get through more than you ever thought you could," the 19-year-old said. "This has been a main target because at one time I wasn't sure if I'd be able to do it."

Friends and family say Wednesday's ceremony reflects Alford's extraordinary courage and resolve in his three-year fight against cancer.

If that burden is not enough, Alford also suffered a broken leg and jaw and cracked ribs when he was struck by a drunken driver in a truck as he crossed a Panama City Beach street in the spring of 2011.

"It really just blows me away, knowing he has been through so much," said older brother Will Alford, 21.

"It's like, 'What can be next?' His optimism and strength and determination in wanting to graduate... personally, if it was me, I would probably be in the pity-party thing.

"But Chris is never like that. He's handled everything so well."

Chris Alford is admittedly shy, quiet and yes-sir, no-sir polite. His greenish-blue eyes match a quick, easy smile. But don't be fooled. Alford is tough and has a huge heart, and he's needed both during this harrowing ordeal.

Alford has undergone four major surgeries, and two tumors — one was 15 pounds — were removed from his chest and lungs.

Alford, at 5 feet 6, 130 pounds, displayed his fortitude during the two seasons he wrestled at Chiles on the junior-varsity team after being diagnosed with cancer in August 2009.

Alford also missed a year of school due to treatment that left him behind his 2011 classmates academically. Yet, he

never lost vision of his goal to graduate from Chiles with the 2012 class.

Nothing has come easy, however.

Alford embraced normalcy in his life when he was diagnosed cancer-free in late 2010. But a checkup last January revealed the cancer had returned, leaving Alford and his family wondering if he'd be able to keep pace in the classroom and participate in the Timberwolves' senior activities.

Alford is finishing his two final courses — English Literature and American Government — online.

"With all he has been through the past three years, it's one of those milestones we didn't know if he'd ever make," said Bill Alford, 60, Chris' father.

"Chris is not a big talker, but he stays focused and takes care of himself pretty well. He has cried a little during this, but not much. He's always been a fighter and has never really complained."

Chris credits athletics, specifically wrestling, for his strong-willed approach. While a switch in medication has robbed him of his brown hair, the good news is it has left him with more energy the past few months.

Chiles' baseball team dedicated its season to Alford and players had the initials "C.A." written in black ink on each of their hats.

Alford attended the Timberwolves prom with girlfriend Kelsey Klopfensten, a junior at Chiles. Alford and his family kayaked down the Wakulla River on Mother's Day.

And last weekend he attended a music festival in Gulf Shores, Ala., with Klopfenstein and other friends to watch his favorite group, the Dave Matthews Band.

Alford also loves deep sea fishing and recently returned to swimming for exercise even though his current treatment doesn't end until August.

He's also recovered from his injuries sustained a year ago when he was struck by a drunken driver.

Wrestling with cancer makes graduation huge...

continued

"It's ridiculous what Chris has been through and he's the most unbelievable kid I've ever met," said Alex Fischer, a childhood friend and 2011 graduate of Chiles who is a freshman at the University of Florida.

"He has shown me to appreciate things a lot more. You can see it in his eyes and it (cancer) is painful, but he won't admit it and he's strong about it. Stronger than anyone I know."

A large crowd of family and friends is expected to cheer Alford's walk across the Civic Center stage on Wednesday.

The congratulatory handshake and diploma presentation will take only minutes, but the ceremony represents a long, emotional three-year journey for Alford.

"I can't even begin to describe the excitement I am going to feel on that stage," Alford said, his soft-spoken voice rising. His mother Connie echoed a similar sentiment, saying, "I can't imagine or describe it either. I think I will be an emotional wreck, but it's going to be so sweet.

He has worked so hard for this."

Alford's not stopping when he walks off that stage either. He plans to attend [Tallahassee Community College](#) and one day pursue a career in law or nursing.

"I don't ask, 'Why me?' because it can happen to anyone," Alford said of cancer. "It happened to find me, but you just have to keep fighting. It's not like you can change it."

TCC now accepting applications for STEM scholarships

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - Tallahassee Community College's STEM Program, an initiative within the College's Division of Science and Mathematics, is currently accepting scholarship applications for the 2012-13 academic year.

The current STEM scholarship application deadline is June 15.

The program is designed to attract more young people into the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines by assisting academically talented but financially needy students earn their college degree in an associated field. The STEM Program also mentors and supports students through degree completion, as well as partners with employers to facilitate job placement.

Funded by the National Science Foundation, STEM scholarships provide students with individual learning plans, mentoring, study groups and internship opportunities.

A \$3,000 annual scholarship (total of \$6,000 over two years) is available to earn a two-year college degree in one of the STEM disciplines. A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required and financial need is determined by the U.S. Department of Education.

Students interested in the STEM Program can apply for scholarships online at www.tcc.fl.edu/scholarships.

For more information on the STEM Program, contact Dr. Ed Stringer by phone, (850) 201-8189, or email STEMstar@tcc.fl.edu.

GOVERNOR DROPS BY FOR A VISIT

BYRON SPIRES

Governor Rick Scott paid an early Monday morning visit to the Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce office where he met with a number of local dignitaries and business owners.

Governor Scott was introduced by County Commissioner Eugene Lamb.

Lamb explained that in a visit to the Governor's Office concerning his recent appointment to the [Tallahassee Community College's](#) Board of Trustees, he had discussed with Scott about a visit to Gadsden County.

Lamb said his discussions with the Governor were about economic growth needed in Gadsden County and he agreed to visit the community.

In his introduction, Lamb said that the Governor had been very receptive in learning about Gadsden county.

Scott began by saying he viewed his job as being about three things.

He named education as his first priority.

His and the state board of education's focus, he explained, was to look at ways to improve the system.

Scott praised Senator Bill Montford, saying he cares a lot about these counties.

"He cares a lot about the right things, that kids get a good education, making sure our people get a good job and that your government is not raising the cost of living," Scott said about Montford.

Scott listed economic development as his next priority.

"We are making progress. But not enough until everyone has a job," he said.

Scott said unemployment was down from 11.1 percent to 8.7 percent. He said the state was bucking the national trend.

"We are working on things that are costing our citizens money," Scott said, and referred to insurance as one of those issues.

Scott stated that the state's revenues were up as well.

"Every county is important. Every job is important," Scott said.

Another important issue that he mentioned was Medicaid payments by counties and the state.

According to Scott, Medicaid has become a growing problem that is draining the state's revenues.

He went on to say that "if we don't get a handle on the growth of Medicaid, we will not have the money for education."

Medicaid is growing at 3.5 times the rate of the state's revenue, he added.

Scott stated that the state Agency for Health Care Administration, (AHCA) was working to make sure that the charges to counties were correct. Each county must pay a portion of Medicaid charges for county residents that are not served in their county.

Small counties have in the past been held harmless but, as of March, new laws require that AHCA recoup any disputed Medicaid charges to the counties going back more than a decade.

In Gadsden County's case, it could be as high as \$900,000. The state has said the county can take up to three years to pay it back. If it isn't paid, however, the state has threatened to withhold sales tax revenue funding for the county.

County Commission Chairperson Sherrie Taylor said that the county was looking at a \$1.5 million shortfall and asked if there were other ways that counties could pay for Medicaid. "Will there be any light to help us on this end," Taylor asked about counties being impacted by the recent laws.

In response, Scott said the federal government should give the state a block grant which would allocate funds to local communities to cover their needs.

"They take our tax dollars in Washington and give it back with all of these rules," he said about the problem with Medicaid.

He mentioned a state-wide managed care program as one solution that would save money. More individuals with a small co-payment was also mentioned.

Currently, he said, the state is paying about 45 percent of Medicaid.

GOVERNOR DROPS BY FOR A VISIT...

continued

Concerning the new law about funding, he said AHCA would be very responsive about how fast these counties will be able to pay the money back.

Tallahassee Community College President Jim Murdaugh mentioned the need for jobs in Gadsden County.

"We have got to figure out a way to create jobs in Gadsden County," Murdaugh said.

Scott said in response that Florida needed to call on everybody it can think of to locate in the state. Florida, he said, had less taxes, less regulation and litigation risk.

Chamber of Commerce Director David Gardner added that most people do not understand that economic development cures a lot.

Gardner said he had several companies looking at Gadsden County but his biggest problem was resources, a problem for all rural counties.

He said there were two companies that he would be announcing soon that are moving to Gadsden County.

School Superintendent Reginald James told Scott about the county's Corrections Officer Academy which provides training through the Pat Thomas Law Enforcement Academy for senior high school students.

The students that complete the training are certified as corrections officers and eligible for full-time employment when they graduate from high school.

Gadsden's the only program like it in the state, James said.

During the meeting, Scott stated that since becoming governor he has eliminated over 1,460 regulations. He said he wants to know about any regulations at the state level that are unfair.

Video excerpts from the meeting will be posted at the Herald website, havanaherald.net.

The Week Ahead for June 11 to June 15

FLORIDA CURRENT STAFF

HIGHER ED TASK FORCE...The Florida Blue Ribbon Task Force on State Higher Education Reform holds its first in-person meetings on Monday. Committee meetings on Accountability, in Senate Building, Room 227; Tuition/Funding; in Senate Building, Room 229; and Governance in Senate Building, Room 231 are 8:45 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. The full Task Force meets at 12:30 p.m. in the Cabinet Room. of The Capitol. The agenda can be found [here](#).

COMMUNICATIONS TAXES...The Communications Services Tax Working Group of the Department of Revenue will meet from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday at 2450 Shumard Oak Blvd., Building One, Room 1820, Tallahassee. The group includes representatives from local governments and the telecommunications industry and is studying potential changes to the state's communications tax system. The meeting will be accessible via telephone and Internet. Information for that access is included in the agenda, which can be found [here](#).

INNOCENCE COMMISSION...The Florida Innocence Commission meets 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday at the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando. Contact: Cheryl Magnes at 850-488-0206 or FIC@flcourts.org.

MERCURY LEVELS...The Florida Department of Environmental Protection holds the last of a series of meetings across the state to discuss developing a statewide limit for mercury pollution. It will be 1:30 p.m. Monday at DEP, Room 609, 2600 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee. An agenda is available from Pat Waters at (850) 245-8449.

SSRC MEETS...The Southwood Shared Resource Center holds its regular monthly meeting at 1:30 p.m. Monday in the Turlington Building, Room 1706, 325 W. Gaines Street, Tallahassee. Agenda: contact Rick Mitchell at (850)488-9895 or rick.mitchell@ssrc.myflorida.com.

Tuesday, June 12

STAND YOUR GROUND...The Task Force on Citizen Safety and Protection, created by Gov. Rick Scott to look at Florida's controversial self-defense laws, holds its first public meeting from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday at Northland Church, 530 Dog Track Road, Longwood. The meeting will be open for public comment from 1 to 5 p.m.

CITIZENS RATE HIKE...The Citizens Property Insurance Corp. Board of Governors meets 1:30 p.m. Tuesday via teleconference. The meeting will continue Wednesday

at 9 a.m. Wednesday in Orlando. The board is expected to discuss a controversial plan to raise rates for new customers above a 10 percent cap set by the Legislature. Teleconference info: 1-888-942-8686 Participant Code: 5743735657. Meeting documents may be posted [here](#).

FP&L RATE INCREASE...The Florida Public Service Commission is holding a series of public hearings this week about a Florida Power & Light Co. rate increase request. They are 4 p.m. Tuesday at Sunset Harbor Yacht Club and Conference Center, 861 Ballough Road, Daytona Beach; 4 p.m. Wednesday at Brevard County Governmental Center, Commission Room, Building C, 1st Floor, 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Melbourne; and 4 p.m. Thursday at Solid Waste Authority of Palm Beach County Auditorium, 7501 N. Jog Road, West Palm Beach. See the docket [here](#).

SUWANNEE RIVER DIRECTOR ... The Suwannee River Water Management District board holds its regularly monthly meeting and will consider approving the appointment of Ann Shortelle as executive director. The board meets at 9 a.m. at district headquarters, 9225 CR 49 in Live Oak. To see the agenda or other board materials, click [here](#).

Wednesday, June 13

IT'S ABOUT CITRUS...The Florida Department of Citrus meets in conjunction with the Florida Citrus Industry Annual Conference at 9 Wednesday to hold a regular meeting. Agenda: Heather Facey, hfacey@citrus.state.fl.us or (863)537-3951. It will be held at Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa, 5001 Coconut Road, Bonita Springs.

PAROLE COMMISSION...The Florida Parole Commission hearings on about 480 cases are scheduled in Broward County on Wednesday and Thursday. The hearings begin at 9 a.m. In Fort Lauderdale City Commission Chambers, 100 N. Andrews Ave., Fort Lauderdale. Agenda can be found [here](#).

HIGHER EDUCATION... The Higher Education Coordinating Council will meet to discuss the various groups studying higher education issues and a study about what the future economy might demand from the state's students. The meeting starts at 9 a.m. at the Turlington Building, 325 W. Gaines Street, 17th Floor Conference Room in Tallahassee. The agenda can be found [here](#).

The Week Ahead for June 11 to June 15...

continued

STORMWATER CONFERENCE ... The Florida Stormwater Association holds its annual conference in Fort Myers at the Sanibel Harbour Marriott from Wednesday through Friday. For the agenda and registration information, click [here](#).

Conference Center in Tallahassee. For information email FLOIR2012IndustryConference@FLOIR.com or contact Claire Call at 850-413-2526.

Thursday, June 14

SUPREME COURT...The Florida Supreme Court issues its weekly rulings at 11 a.m. Thursday.

WAKULLA ENERGY ... The Tallahassee-Leon County Economic Development Council holds a roundtable on renewable energy. Speakers will be Jim Murdaugh, president of [Tallahassee Community College](#) and Kim Gay of Talquin Electric Cooperative. The roundtable will be held at the [TCC Wakulla Center](#), 5 Crescent Way in Crawfordville. The deadline for registration is Monday, June 11. Go to the registration web site by clicking [here](#).

PSC APPLICATIONS ... The Public Service Commission Nominating Council is accepting applications through June 14 for the Public Service Commission seat now held by Lisa Edgar. Contact Mavis Knight at (850) 922-5035 or email knight.mavis@leg.state.fl.us.

Friday, June 15

ETHICS COMMISSION...The Florida Commission on Ethics meets to discuss its legislative agenda for 2013. It's also to consider whether it would violate state law for Gov. Rick Scott to give recorded greetings to visitors on airport shuttles at Tampa International Airport. The meeting is 8:30 a.m. Friday in room 37 of the Senate Office Building, 404 S. Monroe St., Tallahassee. The agenda can be found [here](#).

STATE LANDS ... The state Acquisition and Restoration Council meets to consider proposed land purchases and state land management issues. The council meets at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, at 9 a.m. The agenda is available by clicking [here](#).

JOBLESS STATS...Information on Florida's unemployment rate and jobs numbers for May will be released by the Department of Economic Opportunity on Friday, June 15.

INSURANCE CONFERENCE...Registration ends Monday for the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation 2012 Industry Conference to be held 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday at FSU

Update: Annual conference to explore human resources topics

Business Matters Staff Report

9:31 A. M.

Today is the last opportunity for advance registration. Conference chair Shannon Roberts said those planning to attend Wednesday are urged to register online at bigbendshrm.shrm.org.

8:45 A. M.

The Big Bend Society for Human Resource Management and [Tallahassee Community College](#) present the eighth annual HR Tallahassee Conference on Wednesday beginning at 7:30 a.m.

The event takes place at [TCC's](#) Center for Workforce Development and consists of a full day of training sessions and speakers. It is designed for personnel managers, small business owners and other supervisors who have HR responsibilities.

"The HR Tallahassee Conference is designed specifically to assist human resources professionals, business managers and small business owners successfully tackle the many changes impacting the workforce today. The conference will provide great networking opportunities, as well as provide attendees with great guidance and resources that they can immediately implement in their organizations," said Shannon Roberts, conference chair.

The event is being sponsored by The Krizner Group and Cumulus Media. For more information, visit the Big Bend SHRM's website, bigbendshrm.shrm.org.

TCC earns strong national marks from Community College Week

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- Community College Week has released its annual Top 100 analysis, a report examining degrees and certificates awarded at community colleges across the nation. The report, based on the 2010-11 academic year, again shows that **Tallahassee Community College** remains one of America's top associate degree producers.

In the 2012 report, released on Monday, **TCC** earned a national ranking in six different categories, including No. 17 among two-year institutions in the total number of associate degrees awarded during the 2010-11 academic year. According to the report, **TCC** awarded 2,657 associate degrees during the 2010-11 academic year. The following are the categories where **TCC** is ranked:

- Ranked 4th in Associate in Arts (AA) Degrees (degree used to transfer to 4 year institutions). **TCC** awarded 2,424 AA degrees.
- Ranked 6th in awarding associate degrees to African American students. **TCC** graduated 705 African American students.
- Ranked 13th in awarding degrees in EMT, Respiratory Care, Radiation Therapist and Ultrasound Technician. **TCC** graduated 48 students in these Health Science Areas.
- Ranked 16th in awarding associate degrees to non-minorities students. **TCC** awarded 1,549 associate degrees to non-minority students.
- Ranked 24th in awarding associate degrees to all minority categories. **TCC** awarded 965 associate degrees to minority students.

The data are collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Set (IPEDS) completions survey.

The analysis is limited to institutions that are eligible for participation in Title IV programs – which encompass all federal financial aid – located in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. To be Title IV eligible, an institution must be accredited by either a regional or specialized accreditation agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Debate series set for primary, general election

THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

Debate series set for primary, general election

Three Republican candidates hoping to unseat Democrat incumbent U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson will tilt verbal lances next month in a debate sponsored by a group including Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association. GOP hopefuls former U.S. Senator George Lemieux, former U.S. Rep. Dave Weldon and businessman Mike McCalister will test their mettle against each other during the first in a series of debates leading up to the general election. Yet to confirm is Rep. Connie Mack, who according to polls leads the pack of Republicans hoping to trip up Nelson. Mack's campaign said earlier their candidate would skip the event, saying it would only help his Democratic opponent. The Republican primary debate is set for July 24 at [Tallahassee Community College](#) – and the general election debate is set for live statewide broadcast from Nova Southeastern University on Oct. 17.

Plant City farm to cut jobs

More than 600 farmworkers in Plant City will be laid off when Trapnell Road Farms shuts down in August, according to a notice filed with the state Department of Economic Opportunity. The strawberry farm is being shut down with some operations being consolidated with another operation in Duette owned by the same company, the Tampa Bay Business Journal reported Wednesday. A notice filed with DEO said the shut down would lead to 608 layoffs, but the business journal reported that the workers will be offered jobs at the other facility.

Republican Senate candidates to debate – but without Mack

By line

Leadership Florida is once again partnering with the Florida Press Association to sponsor statewide debates, booking two with candidates for U.S. Senate. But true to his pronouncement last week, U.S. Rep. Connie Mack IV — who's way out in front in all the polls — hasn't told sponsors that he's participating in the Republican session.

The other three candidates — former U.S. Sen. George LeMieux of Ft. Lauderdale; former U.S. Rep. Dave Weldon of Indialantic; and Plant City businessman Mac McAlister will appear on Tuesday, July 24, at [Tallahassee Community College](#).

On Oct. 15, the winner of the Aug. 14 GOP primary will face off against two-term Democratic incumbent Bill Nelson at Nova Southeastern University in Davie.

Both debates will be televised statewide.

Read the release below.

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The successful statewide partnership that produced historic candidate debates in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 is back – this time to help Floridians choose their next U.S. Senator. “Decision 2012: Before You Vote,” a project created by Leadership Florida, in partnership with the Florida Press Association, today announced solid details for the exciting new debate series for the 2012 primary and general election cycles, featuring the major candidates for Florida's U.S. Senate seat. Many political observers consider this Florida contest the most-watched U.S. Senate race in the country.

The partnership's Decision 2010 debates for the Governorship and U.S. Senate were broadcast statewide in all 11 media markets — a historic feat that Decision 2012 will replicate. The Republican primary debate is set for July 24th at [Tallahassee Community College](#) – and the general election debate is set for live statewide broadcast from Nova Southeastern University on October 17th.

“Decision 2012: Before You Vote provides millions of Floridians with the opportunity to learn more about the candidates and where they stand on the issues that matter most,” said Wendy Abberger, President of Leadership Florida. “Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association are pleased to convene these important candidate forums because they will provide statewide opportunities for open dialogue and discussion.”

The debate series sponsors and partners also include

Nova Southeastern University, [Tallahassee Community College](#), Florida Blue, AARP and the Claude Pepper Foundation.

The first debate will occur on Tuesday, July 24th, at [Tallahassee Community College](#) – and will feature candidates vying for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate. WFSU-TV will produce the broadcast taping for the debate. Former U.S. Sen. George LeMieux, former Congressman Dave Weldon and businessman Mike McAlister all have confirmed their willingness to participate. The debate partnership awaits confirmation from Congressman Connie Mack to round out the primary debate lineup. The evening debate will be videotaped for quick-turnaround statewide broadcast in the following days.

“[Tallahassee Community College](#) is excited to host this important dialogue in the nation's most-watched race for the U.S. Senate,” said Dr. James Murdaugh, president of [TCC](#).

The second debate will occur on the evening of Oct. 17th, 2012, and will be broadcast live, statewide, from the campus of Nova Southeastern University in Davie, Florida, in a broadcast produced by NBC affiliate WPTV-Ch. 5, of West Palm Beach. Incumbent U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson (D) is expected to face his Republican nominee opponent at that time. Nova Southeastern University partnered with Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association by hosting 2006 & 2010 debates for Governor and U.S. Senate.

“Nova Southeastern University continues to perform an important convening role on vital issues by promoting healthy dialogue about how best to build a better future for our state and country,” said George L. Hanbury II, PhD., president of NSU.

Pat Dorsey, publisher of The Tallahassee Democrat and chairman of the Florida Press Association, said that Florida's newspapers will provide robust coverage of the Senate race, which may prove to be one of the key races of 2012.

“These debates will give Floridians an opportunity to assess the candidates, side by side, as they address the issues relevant to our state,” said Dorsey.

Debate participation criteria and additional details are posted at www.beforeyouvote.org.

Our Opinion: Talk to the voters

Mack should realize the value of debate

U.S. Rep. Connie Mack IV seems to be feeling pretty good about his chances in the Aug. 14 Republican primary for the U.S. Senate seat now held by Democrat Bill Nelson.

He has gathered endorsements from Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, former Gov. Jeb Bush and even the GOP's presumptive presidential nominee, Mitt Romney. He has about a 20-point lead in the polls. And he has spectacular name recognition, not only as a congressman but as the son of a former U.S. senator and the great-grandson of baseball Hall of Fame manager Connie Mack.

So secure is Mr. Mack about his chances that he has decided he does not need to debate his fellow Republican candidates. Mr. Mack is refusing to take part in at least two July debates that will feature his opponents, former U.S. Sen. George LeMieux, former Rep. Dave Weldon and Mike McCalister. The reason, according to Mr. Mack's campaign manager, is that the race is in essence already over.

A debate sponsored by the Florida Press Association and Leadership Florida is scheduled to be held July 24 at [Tallahassee Community College](#). A July 26 debate sponsored by the Tampa Bay Times and cable news station Bay News 9 will be aired on public TV and radio.

Certainly, Mr. Mack has an interest in preserving his front-runner status. But he also should have an interest in an educated electorate.

To their credit, the Republican presidential candidates engaged in a grueling series of debates. Sometimes, it seems as if there was one on TV every night. But nobody can claim that we weren't given a chance to find out where the candidates stood on the important issues.

Back in 1988, Mr. Mack's father refused to debate primary opponent Robert Merkle, who would bring along a cardboard cutout dubbed Cardboard Connie.

Let's hope we don't need a reprise of that nearly a quarter-century later.

With his baseball heritage, Mr. Mack shouldn't be too smug about his chances, perhaps recalling the famous words of another Hall of Famer, Yogi Berra: "It ain't over till it's over."

But more important, as a man who hopes to represent

this state in the U.S. Senate, Connie Mack IV should realize the value of debate and an open, lively conversation if our nation is to move forward.

50 LARGE rebuilds young men

Anti-gang initiative has wide support

MARGIE MENZEL

Today, Christopher Butler is a scholarship student at [Tallahassee Community College](#). He plans to major in information technology at Florida State University. But his life could have taken a very different turn.

"I had a financial situation and I didn't want to tell anybody, so I started selling marijuana at school," Butler said. "So I got into trouble, and that's when '50 LARGE' came in to help me."

50 LARGE (Lifelong Achievement Responsibility Growth Education) is an anti-gang initiative based at the Leon County Schools, but with widespread community support.

"They were my mentors, my role models," Butler said. "They helped me get out of the situation that I was in, and then they took me in as a little brother, as a family member. And they've just held onto me ever since then, and I've been successful ever since then."

50 LARGE includes department training, tutoring in reading comprehension from the FSU College of Education, technology training with Goodwill Industries — where the young men learn to repair and refurbish computers — and community service. State Rep. Alan Williams is so impressed that every legislative session, when he chooses a page and a messenger, he reserves one space for 50 LARGE.

"Our young men that we're losing to gangs, our young men that we're losing to ... just giving up on themselves, the ones that we're losing that don't end up in college," Williams said, "50 LARGE is providing that bridge."

Lt. Steve Outlaw of the Tallahassee Police Department, a member of the 50 LARGE steering committee, said that when most people think of gangs, they think of national ones like the Bloods and the Crips — but that's not so much the problem in Tallahassee.

"We see some transitioning to the national affiliation," Outlaw said. "But as the old adage goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure. In our case, we can't afford a whole pound of response. And so the ounces that the community can contribute to programs like 50 LARGE, on the intervention and prevention side, that's where we like to put our money."

One reason: Larry Thompson, special projects coordinator at the Leon schools and the leader of 50 LARGE, whose

slogan is "We take 'em to raise."

"We're not a program, we're a family," Thompson said. "We take these young men under our wings and do just about anything and everything for them and with them to get their lives redirected."

But that doesn't mean putting up with substandard behavior. The young men of 50 LARGE are 11 to 18 years old and often the sons of single, working mothers. They need role models — and their case managers and tutors at 50 LARGE provide that, along with some tough love.

"Young men have to learn how to present themselves and how to have some good character," Thompson said. "We start with making sure they pull their pants up, that they make eye contact ... say 'Yes, sir' and 'Yes, ma'am' and 'Please' and 'Thank you.'"

The results are formidable. Eighty percent of the young men gave up their gang participation, and 65 percent improved their school attendance. Fully 100 percent demonstrated increased reading levels, for which Thompson credits Kelly Seay of the Florida Department of Education.

"It's something they develop with practice. Just as they want to go out and shoot hoops every afternoon, we're going to read books every afternoon," Seay said.

Working with FSU's graduate education students is a win-win, she said, because the grad students learn as much as their mentees.

"We're very real with the kids. We don't take excuses," she said. "And we don't just call words. We're going to teach you comprehension strategies. We're going to stop after three sentences and ask you what you're thinking about right now."

50 LARGE operations manager William "BJ" Fletcher said this hands-on approach is the key to building confidence — and, thus, success.

"Having that person to come in, grab you around the shoulders, 'Hey, man, this is what you need to do,' or constantly hearing that, 'You can make it, you can make it,' and giving you a little boost or motivation to be a better person in life — for yourself," he said.

"After hearing that stuff enough, you'll start believing in yourself and you'll want to do better."

Leadership Florida & Florida Press Assoc. announce dates for key US Senate debates

PETER SCHORSCH

The successful statewide partnership that produced historic candidate debates in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 is back – this time to help Floridians choose their next U.S. Senator. “Decision 2012: Before You Vote,” a project created by Leadership Florida, in partnership with the Florida Press Association, today announced solid details for the exciting new debate series for the 2012 primary and general election cycles, featuring the major candidates for Florida’s U.S. Senate seat. Many political observers consider this Florida contest the most-watched U.S. Senate race in the country.

The partnership’s Decision 2010 debates for the Governorship and U.S. Senate were broadcast statewide in all 11 media markets — a historic feat that Decision 2012 will replicate. The Republican primary debate is set for July 24th at [Tallahassee Community College](#) – and the general election debate is set for live statewide broadcast from Nova Southeastern University on October 17th.

“Decision 2012: Before You Vote provides millions of Floridians with the opportunity to learn more about the candidates and where they stand on the issues that matter most,” said Wendy Abberger, President of Leadership Florida. “Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association are pleased to convene these important candidate forums because they will provide statewide opportunities for open dialogue and discussion.”

The debate series sponsors and partners also include Nova Southeastern University, [Tallahassee Community College](#), Florida Blue, AARP and the Claude Pepper Foundation.

The first debate will occur on Tuesday, July 24th, at [Tallahassee Community College](#) – and will feature candidates vying for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate. WFSU-TV will produce the broadcast taping for the debate. Former U.S. Sen. George LeMieux, former Congressman Dave Weldon and businessman Mike McCalister all have confirmed their willingness to participate. The debate partnership awaits confirmation from Congressman Connie Mack to round out the primary debate lineup. The evening debate will be videotaped for quick-turnaround statewide broadcast in the following days.

“[Tallahassee Community College](#) is excited to host this

important dialogue in the nation’s most-watched race for the U.S. Senate,” said Dr. James Murdaugh, president of [TCC](#).

The second debate will occur on the evening of Oct. 17th, 2012, and will be broadcast live, statewide, from the campus of Nova Southeastern University in Davie, Florida, in a broadcast produced by NBC affiliate WPTV-Ch. 5, of West Palm Beach. Incumbent U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson (D) is expected to face his Republican nominee opponent at that time. Nova Southeastern University partnered with Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association by hosting 2006 & 2010 debates for Governor and U.S. Senate.

“Nova Southeastern University continues to perform an important convening role on vital issues by promoting healthy dialogue about how best to build a better future for our state and country,” said George L. Hanbury II, PhD., president of NSU.

Pat Dorsey, publisher of The Tallahassee Democrat and chairman of the Florida Press Association, said that Florida’s newspapers will provide robust coverage of the Senate race, which may prove to be one of the key races of 2012.

“These debates will give Floridians an opportunity to assess the candidates, side by side, as they address the issues relevant to our state,” said Dorsey.

Debate participation criteria and additional details are posted at www.beforeyouvote.org.

Connie Mack Reels in the Support of Pam Bondi

KEVIN DERBY

With two months to go until the primary, despite refusing to commit to an upcoming debate, U.S. Rep. Connie Mack is ahead of his Republican rivals in the polls and the GOP leadership is increasingly rallying behind the congressman to be their party's choice to challenge Democrat incumbent U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson in November.

On Wednesday, Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi became the latest high-profile Republican to endorse Mack's Senate bid.

"It is crucial that we elect strong and fiscally conservative leaders to the United States Senate, who will stand up to overreaching federal government power and out-of-control federal spending in Washington, D.C.," Bondi said in a statement released on Wednesday morning. "During my service as Florida's attorney general, and through our united efforts to fight the prescription drug epidemic in our state and nation, I have developed an incredible respect and personal friendship with both Connie and Mary Bono Mack, and I am pleased to offer Connie my endorsement and support of his campaign for U.S. Senate."

Mack, for his part, praised Bondi for leading the charge in the state's constitutional challenge to the federal health-care law that President Barack Obama signed back in 2010.

"When Florida elected Pam Bondi they said 'enough' to Obamacare," Mack said. "Her tireless work to undo the damage done to our country and our economy by Bill Nelson and Barack Obama makes all of us proud. General Bondi's support of our campaign to change the U.S. Senate underscores the energy that is building in our effort, and I am deeply grateful."

While the Mack camp has not been shy in trumpeting the endorsements their candidate has garnered from national Republican leaders -- including presidential candidate Mitt Romney and tea party movement favorites in the Senate like Mike Lee of Utah and Rand Paul of Kentucky -- the Mack team has also picked up the support of some of the leading Republicans in the Sunshine State.

Former Gov. Jeb Bush has thrown his support to Mack. With her endorsement on Wednesday, Bondi joins Cabinet colleague Agricultural Commissioner Adam Putnam in supporting Mack's bid. Two former Cabinet officials -- former Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson and former Attorney General Bill McCollum --

have also supported Mack. Mack has also reeled in the support of several colleagues in the Florida congressional delegation.

While some of the leading Republicans in Florida -- including Gov. Rick Scott and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio -- continue to remain uncommitted in the Senate primary contest, one of Mack's rivals has also done well in reeling in endorsements.

Former U.S. Sen. George LeMieux, who is looking to return to the Senate, has won the support of prominent national Republicans including former Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi, U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma and former presidential candidate Herman Cain. LeMieux has also won the support of more than 30 state legislators.

Even dark-horse candidates have reeled in prominent endorsements. Conservative writer Marielena Stuart, for example, has won the support of former U.S. Rep. Bob Dornan of California in her bid for the Senate nomination.

With a solid lead in the polls and the backing of many of the state's prominent Republicans, Mack has not committed to debate his rivals for the party's nomination, leading to attacks from the other GOP hopefuls. The three other major Republicans in the race -- LeMieux, former U.S. Rep. Dave Weldon and businessman and retired Army officer Mike McCalister -- have all committed to debate on July 24 at [Tallahassee Community College](#). Nelson is expected to engage in a general election debate with whoever emerges with the Republican nomination at Nova Southeastern University in Davie on Oct. 17.

Locals Overcome Poverty to Lead Successful Lives

Lanetra Bennett

[UPDATE] by Lanetra Bennett - June 14, 2012 - 6:01pm

Shani Lane never imagined a graduation day like this one.

She's graduating from the Capital Area Community Action Agency's Self-Sufficiency Program.

Lane says selling drugs to provide for her kids landed her in jail.

She says, "Getting out, I had nowhere to go. The first thing I thought about was I want to go back trying to sell drugs. But, I remembered community Action could help people if they go out and find a job, they would have their back."

Lane says the program helped her get stable. She now has a full-time job, and she is on track to graduate from **TCC** in December.

"I used them as a stepping stool and pushed my stumbling blocks out of the way. I kept going forward and I started succeeding, and it felt really good. So, I kept going, and I'm going to keep on going." Lane says.

The program provides support to families experiencing financial crisis, and who are committed to achieving a higher quality of life.

Eight people graduated Thursday.

One of the graduates ended her speech by saying, "No matter what comes your way, never, never give up."

Case Manager Lasharn Quince accepted the certificate for her client. Her client was a 20-year-old mother with three kids, facing eviction, with no diploma or G.E.D.

Quince says, "I've even heard people say, oh well, this will be another statistic. Well, she fought those statistics."

Quince says her client got her GED and put it on Quince's office wall, called the Triple-A Allstars.

"And what is says, is, show me what you're working with, and that's what she did." Says, Quince.

To learn how you can apply for the program, call The Capital Area Community Action Agency at 850-222-2043.

Tallahassee, FL -- June 14, 2012 --

A special graduation program will honor eight local residents who overcame major challenges and successfully moved out of poverty at a special luncheon Thursday, June 14, 2012, beginning at 11:45 AM at the

Smith-Williams Community Center. The Capital Area Community Action Agency worked with these families to help them become more self-sufficient. The Zonta Club of Tallahassee is hosting the event.

"These individuals demonstrate that with a strong will and a little help from the community, they can overcome challenges to become productive contributing members of the community," said Tim Center, Executive Director of Capital Area Community Action Agency.

Through case management, the Agency's Family Self-Sufficiency Program (funded by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services) provides comprehensive support to families experiencing chronic financial crisis, and who demonstrate a commitment to overcoming barriers to achieve a higher quality of life. Assistance included education and job training, job placement, transportation, gas vouchers, food vouchers, rental assistance and more.

For nearly three years, the honorees participated in programs designed to empower individuals in the community by giving them the skills and resources needed to improve the quality of their lives.

The honorees include:

Shani Lane - Ms. Lane came to Capital Area in 2009

homeless and is now on track to graduate from **TCC** in December 2012 with an Associate of Arts degree in Social Work. She is working a full-time job as the Operations Manager at Steak-n-Shake.

Terence White - Came into the program in 2010 with aspirations of going to barbering school. He completed barbering school and is now operating a mobile barbering business.

Valarie Colson -Unemployed and living off of her husband's VA benefits, child support, and financial aid, she secured her cosmetology license, works in her mother's salon and is on track to receive her BA in Business Administration in December 2012 from Keiser College. She entered the program in 2010.

David Banegas and Karla Cruce - This homeless couple needed to secure both housing and employment. Both are now working full-time jobs and have maintained housing for 2 years and are now over-income for program services.

Locals Overcome Poverty to Lead Successful Lives...

continued

Tamara Davis - Homeless and working part-time while receiving child support, Ms. Davis is now enrolled at [Tallahassee Community College](#) while working a full-time job at Little Lambs Pre-School. She has maintained housing for 2 years.

Alrene Hicks - Ms. Hicks will receive special recognition for successfully starting a small business while working full-time at the Department of Children and Families. She is on track to complete her Bachelors degree this summer.

Cassandra Durant - Ms. Durant will receive special recognition after accessing the Agency's Homelessness Prevention Rapid Re-Housing Program for homeless clients. Ms. Durant is now receiving SSI benefits, has successfully managed her Micro-Enterprise business (Gift Baskets by Cassandra) and maintained housing for 2 years while consistently managing her household budget.

Taniesha Greene - Ms. Greene became homeless due to an eviction and set goals upon enrollment that included obtaining her GED, going to college and maintaining her household budget. She received her GED and is enrolled in Valencia College in Orlando. Additionally, she is employed full-time at Orlando International Airport. Ms. Greene has been able to maintain her household expenses for at least a year.

The Capital Area Community Action Agency offers a safety net to the poor in eight counties in the region. In addition to providing assistance in times of crisis, the Agency operates nine nationally-accredited Head Start Centers and provides a comprehensive, system to assist low-income families to live self-sufficient, quality lives.

Zonta Club of Tallahassee is a chapter of Zonta International which is a global organization of executives and professionals working together to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy. The Tallahassee Chapter runs the Keys are in Her Hands Project, in partnership with the Capital Area Community Action Agency, to mentor very low-income women in an on-going self-sufficiency curriculum.